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AUTHOR Chun, Trudie Iuli
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ABSTRACT

Bilingual education in American Samoa is hampered by several factors: lack of native language materials, inconsistent support for materials and program development, the prominence of English in the modern culture, and teacher discomfort with teaching in Samoan. In the process of developing curriculum and materials, the existing materials were sorted out and a core curriculum was outlined. The provision of a Samoan Language Arts period in the school schedule aided in program development and gave legitimacy to the subject matter. An instructional schedule gradually introducing English was developed for the elementary and secondary grades, but it was discovered that while the teachers were speaking in English, students were continuing to speak mostly in Samoan. Although a full language maintenance program is the objective, the reality is that the program is transitional. Some additional work is being undertaken in developing science materials in Samoan. The next steps to be taken include mandating a language policy, encouraging those outside of curriculum development to write materials, refining existing materials, providing a Samoan language teaching component in local capacity building efforts, and setting up a language commission. (MSE)

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BILINGUAL FRAMEWORK IN AMERICAN SAMOA 1980 - 1985

PRESENTED BY TRUDIE IULI CHUN, PIBBA 1985
TRUK STATE, FSM

For those who do not understand the complexity of the term bilingual and the attitudes circumscribing our efforts, they would say, American Samoa has not come far enough in their need to provide the best for their children. Fortunately, there are those who do comprehend the nature of our work, and remark on the progress of our own situation in American Samoa.

There were several ideas that our curriculum developers had to come to grip with when four years ago we were left without a grant to support our materials development.

(1) Only Samoans could produce native materials for our students.

(2) There is not enough written in Samoan, nor is there much written about Samoa by Samoans.

(3) We cannot continue to depend on federal funding to produce materials.

(4) No other agency is expected to maintain the language and culture of our people.

(5) English is just as important as Samoan in our lives today.

(6) Attitudes change overnight, but materials cannot be developed instantaneously.

With these ideas in mind, the bilingual staff began to consider the direction of their work. In existence were materials that were produced for an earlier grant, consisting of texts that covered every aspect of language teaching. Fortunately for Samoa, there are no dialects within our language. Everyone speaks the same one language. Our language is phonetic, and the controversy in orthography is toward the written form, yet unified in the spoken language. These facts facilitated our work and the actual attack point

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in materials development.

Our first phase was to divide the resource materials by grade level. Our elementary students are placed into two tracks: English Fluency and ESL. We utilized the English core materials to aid our division points. Keeping in mind that the child is a first language speaker in Samoan, we developed workbooks and teacher guides that would reflect a core curriculum. Readers, some developed through the earlier project, and ones produced at this time were assigned to specific grades to provide a reading program. We acknowledge the crudeness of some of our work as we continued to pilot and revise our materials.

A catalyst that provided momentum for our efforts was the addition of a Samoan Language Arts time frame in the instructional day. This creation gave our subject matter legitimacy, requiring us to provide materials, teacher inservice and allowed teachers to question: what do I teach, where is my material, and how do I teach?

In addition to providing for our ESL students, it was necessary to address the language needs of our limited Samoan speakers. A text on language use, written with English speaking students in mind was produced and has served our needs presently. Teachers in fluency classes have the option of utilizing either our Samoan program or our English version, dependent on the Samoan fluency of students.

Three years ago, there seemed to be a wave of resentment in our efforts to teach Samoan. Parents began to complain that Samoan was being taught to their children when English was more important. Acknowledging that you cannot fight the general public, we turned to the real issue: How do we convince parents that learning the Samoan language structure and utilizing a child's first language will induce better English speakers.

Our solution was to build an Enlgish and Samoan syllabus that would reflect the scope and sequence of skills to be mastered by every child. To convince people even further, we began to provide an awareness program to educators on our syllabus project while it was being drafted. We promoted the idea that our goals would not succeed if teachers didn't begin to speak more English. This approach was accepted and to date, we hold to the same course.

In our training sessions, teachers are asked to utilize English according to the level of her students: Our language of instruction chart indicates:

Level 1	90%	Samoan	10%	English
Level 2	80%	"	20%	"
Level 3	70%	"	30%	"
Level 4	60%	"	40%	"
Level 5	50%	"	50%	"
Level 6	40%	"	60%	"
Level 7	30%	"	70%	"
Level 8	20%	"	80%	"
H.S.	10%	"	90%	"

Be wary snould you wish to attempt this scheme. In the last 18 months, our teachers are making every attempt to speak as much English, yet, we are finding that they neglected to demand the same from the students. Consequently, teachers were instructing in English at greater percentages, yet students continued to speak to them in Samoan 90% of the time.

The second phase in our efforts was to review our core English curriculum and work on correlation. You are aware that we continue to maintain oral English instruction through television lessons. Our langugae program is that of SPC materials and our basal reading series is the Miami Linguistic Reading program. We found many subskills were often neglected due to fragmentation and variance of format from one program to another. The syllabus has remedied this problem, and though it is in its pilot stage, we have already sighted many revisions that must be made in the next two years.

The Department of Education directed part of its funding allocations to

local capacity building programs. During our developmental stage, teacher certification and degree programs were being provided for teachers. More qualified teachers were being employed, providing better instruction within our English program. Many teachers were not comfortable in teaching their own language and we accommodated this problem by combining inservice to address both languages. A total bilingual approach in presenting of methods, techniques and materials utilization replaces the separate language idea.

The language curriculum framework of American Samoa must be viewed from two perspectives: theoretically and reality. Theoretically, we would like to engage in a full maintenance program. In reality, the language program is transitional from level 1 through senior high school. This common problem shared by many other systems often stems from the misconception that teaching the first language will keep the second language from achieving any status, or that this plan would leave no room to teach the fa'a-Samoa.

For the past four years, and along the same line with John Kneubuhl's leadership four years prior, the Bilingual staff has worked with two assumptions: 1) yes, we are working with a transitional program of bilingual education and 2) yes, we will develop materials that would eventually ensure a full maintenance program someday. We believe our general public do not understand the options they have by way of bilingual program to select from. We want to be ready to present a program that in reality they want but have not chosen to fully implement.

We are far from the point of providing for a full maintenance program. However, a solid foundation is already in existence to build from and that is what is important. We have begun to translate science concepts into Samoa for the first two grades. This particular task has been facilitated by the fact that teachers have been instructing science and math concepts in Samoan from

English texts. With their assistance, appropriate lessons and terminology are included in materials development.

Though a picture of unending progress has been provided, there are many other facets of our work requiring major decision to be made. Where do we go from here:

1) Mandate a language policy.

to address the language of instruction.
to address the degree of language fluency among our students: in what language, to what extent? orally or the written as well.

2) Advocate others outside of curriculum writers to write.

Solicit funds to assist other writers and groups to develop other work, anthologies, encyclopedias, science and math texts.

3) Refine the existing materials.

Assess through testing and evaluation the materials available, and develop student texts from the guides and readers.

4) Provide a Samoan Language Teaching component in our local capacity building efforts.

Train teachers in the teaching programs to teach Samoan Language Arts.

5) Seek enactment of a language commission.

Set up a committee that would act as arbitrator in language coinage and provide language awareness program.

Keep Language Standing Curriculum Committee of the DOE strong, to approve new texts and make recommendations to the commission.

My advice to any group that is often discouraged by the mountains of issues raised by the terms Bilingual Education, I recommend that you do not let your ultimate goal become lost in the hoopla of trying to defend your

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efforts. As a people, we cannot become authorities of our people, if we do not begin to demonstrate that we have something to say. We cannot improve any program for our students, if we do not communicate what we are trying to do. We cannot let such things as funding prevent us from continuing. And, lastly, we cannot deny that English is here to stay.

There are many factors supporting our cause, maybe just as many as those obstructing progress. We have two weekly newspapers that translate all stories, because to make impact on the general public is to write in Samoan. Our one radio station that has tried to provide a more English sound 24 hours a day, has found people asking for more Samoan music and news reporting in Samoan. Our legislative body conducts all business in Samoan. Finally, there is the nationalistic idea of being fa'a-Samoa that surfaces when threatened by any foreign group.

Look at some of these realities that support your efforts and ignore the stumbling blocks. Any step is a step forward in trying to maintain your language. In closing, sharing of this type, among groups of people is vital if not to boost moral, to give new focus learned from one another. American Samoa is willing to share what expertise there is with any system that could benefit from our own failure and progress.

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